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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002821

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SUBJECT: INSURGENTS THWART WFP'S AID DELIVERY TO JAWAND
DISTRICT IN BADGHIS PROVINCE

Classified By: PRT Director Valerie Fowler for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. From October 10 to October 13, Spanish ISAF soldiers from PRT Qal-e-Now, along with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), escorted a 25-truck convoy with approximately 300 tons of World Food Program (WFP) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) food aid over mountainous and insecure terrain destined for the remote western district of Jawand. Although Spanish and Afghan forces successfully defended the convoy from significant small arms attacks, with at least 26 insurgents killed, WFP representatives from Kabul called off the mission on October 12, with the convoy stopped approximately 25 km outside of Jawand's district center. Without the much-anticipated aid, Jawand's population, the majority already suffering the effects of this year's devastating drought, face an uncertain future as winter approaches. End Summary.

World Food Program Convoy Turns Back

12. (C) Extensive meetings with Badghis provincial officials over a three-week period culminated in UNAMA's confirmation that the WFP in Herat would transfer approximately 260 tons of food to Qal-e-Now for distribution throughout Jawand district. The Ministry of Agriculture, through its provincial line ministry, contributed approximately 40 tons of wheat to the Jawand convoy. In addition, the Ministry of Education contributed one truck with school supplies, the PRT another with humanitarian aid, and the Afghan National Police (ANP) another with food and police provisions for their officers in the district.

13. (C) On October 10 approximately 100 Spanish ISAF troops from PRT Qal-e-Now, Afghan National Army (ANA) and ANP forces provided security for a 25-truck food convoy that departed Qal-e-Now for the 105 km trip to Jawand district center. On October 11 a group of insurgents attacked the convoy's security escorts and two insurgents were killed in the subsequent exchange of fire. Insurgents mounted a larger and more sustained attack on the security forces the following day after the convoy passed through Gulchin and slowly headed towards the notoriously insecure Darzack Pass. This attack

resulted in the deaths of twenty-four insurgents, six killed by combat air support (CAS) and eighteen by attack helicopters. The Darzack area is particularly treacherous for convoys because of the need to negotiate extremely high mountains and a narrow bottleneck above the Murghab River, with no possible escape route if attacked.

¶4. (C) In light of mounting insurgent attacks, and given the anticipated dangers associated with crossing the Darzack Pass, WFP requested the convoy return to Qal-e-Now. On October 13 the provincial Deputy Governor and Jawand district administrator, as well as the NDS and the ANP Chiefs, attempted to negotiate an agreement with locals in Darzack to guarantee the convoy's safe passage to Jawand district center. Unable to reach an agreement, it was necessary for Badghis provincial officials and Spanish ISAF forces to accept the WFP's petition to terminate the mission to Jawand. The convoy and security forces turned back just 25 km short of Jawand's district center.

WFP and ISAF Offer Differing Accounts

¶5. (C) WFP's official account of the events surrounding the humanitarian assistance convoy differs vastly from ISAF's. A statement issued by ISAF on October 11 read, "(i)nsurgents attacked a World Food Programme convoy in Jawand District, Badghis, this morning. Escorting ISAF forces defended the convoy... The insurgents attacked the convoy of trucks contracted by WFP with the aim of disrupting food aid

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deliveries." A WFP spokesperson from WFP's information office in Kabul, however, rejected ISAF's account of the events, stating "the WFP convoy in Badghis was not attacked." The WFP spokesperson maintained that the organization had not requested a security escort from ISAF and that no ISAF escort had been with the convoy. (Note: The USAID representative to the Spanish PRT accompanied the convoy to Jawand and confirmed that Spanish forces did provide a security escort and that the convoy was attacked repeatedly during the mission to Jawand.)

Potential Humanitarian Crisis Looms

¶6. (C) The convoy's failure to reach Jawand district center threatens to undermine the provincial government's and the PRT's credibility in carrying out their mission in Badghis. Although ISAF and provincial security forces successfully defended the convoy from insurgent attacks, the convoy's inability to reach Jawand district center will likely be viewed by many as further evidence of the provincial government's weak influence in outlying districts and proof of growing support for the insurgency among the local population.

¶7. (C) The threat posed to ISAF's and the provincial government's future effort in Badghis is overshadowed by the potentially devastating effect the mission's failure will likely have on the impoverished and isolated people of Jawand district. Already suffering severe food shortages due to an unusually harsh drought, the local population faces even greater isolation and food insecurity as winter approaches. Given the district's extreme remoteness, the provincial government faces a potential humanitarian crisis in Jawand, one that it is ill-equipped to handle.

Ramifications of the WFP Decision

¶8. (C) The mission's failure represents an opportune public relations moment for insurgents throughout Badghis. While

Spanish ISAF forces preferred to press on, mindful of the potential casualties such an effort posed, they and provincial authorities were obligated to terminate the mission at the behest of the WFP, which strongly argued that its neutrality would be compromised among local Afghans if further gunfights ensued between security forces and insurgents en route to Jawand's district center. What WFP failed to consider, perhaps, is the negative long-term effect this decision is likely to have, not just on Jawand's population, but also on the mission of ISAF and the provincial government.

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